

Hanson Economic Development Committee
Approved Minutes of the Meeting
May 17, 2021 at 4:00 pm
Virtually via Zoom Meeting

Call to Order:

At 4:05 PM a virtual Economic Development Committee was called to order by Laura Fitzgerald Kemmett followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present:

Deborah Pettey, Town Planner
Laura Fitzgerald Kemmett, Selectwoman
Jim Geronaitis,
Dan Bathalon
Kevin Cohen(was listening but could not participate until 4:45PM)
Guest: Phillip Schaeffing, Stantec design and Engineering firm

Absent: Kiran Kodali

Documents: Business Survey Results

Meeting taken out of order to accommodate our Guest Speaker Phil Schaeffing from Stantec Consulting.

Deb gave a brief Update on Local Rapid Recovery Program Grant received from DHCD, stating that a business survey had gone out and Phil will be reviewing the results, and finalizing the logistics of the Outreach meeting.

Guest: Phil Schaeffing, Associate and Senior Urban Designer and Planner with Stantec Urban Design. Phil is our plan facilitator for the LRRP Grant.

Phil Schaeffing from Stantec explained the Local Rapid Recovery Program Grant. He explained that it is a planning grant to focus on the downtown area surrounding the MBTA station and to develop some recommendations to help improve that area as a business district within the Town. The overall goal is to develop an actionable project based recovery plan to overcome the economic challenges that were created by the pandemic. Phil stated that those interested can refer to DHCD website for more information on the grant.

Determine what the needs of the local businesses may be in the study area (South Hanson by MBTA station) and develop a set of project recommendations to address those needs. Final plan should be completed by mid-September. We are currently in the first phase which is data collection. A business survey was distributed to the businesses in the study area. Hanson received 7 responses to those business surveys and the data was summarized. We will be entering the second phase of the process which will be to develop a set of project

recommendations. The final phase will be the plan with those recommendations and possible funding sources.

Phil explains there are six main areas that we will be focusing on during this grant planning process. They are classified as follows:

1.) Public Realm: Under this topic we look at the Public area and infrastructure meaning the condition of the streets, sidewalks, street trees, etc. Anything that falls within the public realm that would help to establish a safe, walkable, inviting, commercial district

2.) Private Realm: Under this topic we look at the individual buildings within the area including the store fronts and building conditions and determine what the needs may be and what kind of programs or incentives or design guidelines or standards need to be developed to help those businesses with those needs;

3.) Revenue and Sales for Businesses:

4.) Overall Tenant Mix of the District: Technical assistance to help businesses to get online; establish an effective online presence; helping business understand their customers base who their customers are and where are they coming from and what are their characteristics; It also looks at the overall mix of business in the area and how they compliment each other and if there are any gaps in business types that we could actively recruit to come to that area.

5.) Administrative Capacity: Including Regulatory and Administrative. Regulatory Capacity would include zoning and permitting processes as well as how the district is organized and what are the strengths and weaknesses of the town organization and what approach may help that type of organization.

6.) Cultural and Arts: Events and things that can highlight the district and attract people here; work with local artists and local vendors. Includes anything that would add a different element of life to the study area.

Results of the Business Survey:

Phil shared his screen and the document summarizing the survey results.

The respondents identified that the biggest impacts of Covid to Businesses was a decline in revenue and reduction in hours, and business closings whether temporary or permanent.

Discussion took place regarding the LRRP Outreach Public Meeting which is scheduled for June 1, 2021 at 7PM. The meeting is to be included within the selectmen's meeting and be included on their agenda. Laura suggests using all our means to advertise the meeting: Cable, Facebook. Town Website, Whitman Hanson Express, Hanson business network, and place information on the illuminated sign in front of town hall.

List of projects and how to move forward:

TASK 1: Place the discussion of Business Surveys and Resident Surveys on Agenda

Prioritize goals:

1st priority: LRRP Grant

2nd priority: Getting the Business Surveys and Resident Surveys distributed

3rd Priority: Zoning Bylaw changes: Wait for Stantec to complete the LRRP plan and make zoning bylaw changes as well as to wait for the guidance from the state on the required zoning around the MBTA station.

TASK 2: Invite Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals to a future meeting

TASK 3: Get other towns “Guides to starting a business in” For reference purposes.

Schedule Future Meetings

Brief meeting on May 24, 2021 at 5:00 PM to discuss the logistics of the Outreach Meeting.

TASK 4: Get agenda from Phil Schaeffing from Stantec for the upcoming Outreach Meeting.

Adjournment

Kevin Cohen made a motion to adjourn meeting; Dan Bathalon seconded the motion,

Roll call: Jim Geronaitis “Aye”; Dan Bathalon “Aye”; Kevin Cohen “Aye”, Laura Fitzgerald Kemmett “Aye”

Meeting Adjourned at 4:58 PM.